A REVIEW OF THE STATE OF THE BRITISH NATION.

Thursday, September 1. 1709.

IN my last I began to speak a little, of a great Deal I might say, relating to the Players—— We are at last come to a happy Day many a good Man has pray'd for, and many a ruin'd Family has wish'd for, when the Play-houses (that to us have been Nurseries of Crime, Colleges, or rather Universities of the Devil—*Satan's* Workhouse, where all the Manufactures of Hell are propagated) put down, and for a Time, *Heaven grant it may be for ever*, suppress'd.

It has been some Ages that we have mourn'd for this happy Time; not all the Riots and Debaucheries, not the Lewdness of the Actings, not the worse Lewdness of the Audience; not the wicked Rabbles always attending, not the many Murthers committed there and about it, could ever bring their just Fate upon them before.

Indeed of late Years, since the Practice and Example of the late Reigns have generally discourag'd our National Vices, several Attempts have been made to restrain, reclaim, and also to punish the Exorbitance of the Stage——— Our Courtiers have been willing to suffer a Reformation of them, tho' at the same time they were loth to part with the beloved Charm; the Symphony, form'd between Vice and vicious Inclinations, has been so strong, that one could not be touch'd, but the other would sound; the Fondness of the Age of those Foster-Fathers of their Vice still prevented

vented their being totally sunk; many a lame Pretence they rais'd for their Preservation—And thus they sav'd them from Destruction in the last Reign, contrary to the firm Resolution of the late King, which was several Times fix'd for their Dissolution.

Presuming upon the Conquest they had made over their Fate, that the War first having diverted that Prince from examining into the Mischiefs of their Continuance, and Death having afterward put a Stop to their Fears; they not only lifted up their Heads in the Beginning of this Reign, but had the Impudence to sollicite the Nobility and Gentry to subscribe to the Building a New Play-house, not questioning, but as many Subscribers as they gain'd among the Great Ones for the PLAY-HOUSE, so many Advocates they should have with their Sovereign for the PLAYERS.

And here by the way, I must note, *and I am sure I do it with a great Deal of Justice*, That in the first two Years of Her Majesty's Reign, when the *High-Flying* Party had the Ascendant over our Councils, and *High-Church* Principles govern'd the Nation——— The Kingdom of Crime began with them; May-Poles and Play houses grew up like Churches in the Reformation, and Vice began to thrive, as a constant Contemporary with the Party—— If any Man doubt the Truth of Fact, let him put me upon the Proof of it, when he pleases; and in the mean time let him but observe with me this one Thing, that there were more new May-poles erected, and old ones re-edify'd in that one Year, than ever were in this Nation, since Bishop *Laud's* Reformation by the Book of *Sports*, the Year of the Restoration excepted. This gives Ground to the Story of an old Woman, who, having seen the Musick and Dancing about one of their new May-poles on a *Sunday*, and remembering the Blessed Time, when the Sabbath us'd to be kept in that Manner by Authority, brake out in this most pious Ejaculation about it, *GOOD LORD, Here's the old Religion come again!*

This very Year the Players took Heart; they saw their late Blessed King *William* and Queen *Mary*, who were their Terror, both remov'd by Death; they saw the *High-Church*, who were always their Friends, got into the Administration; and as they knew, debauching the Peoples Morals was always a Maxim of *High-Church* Politicks, that Tyranny and Vice were always Brethren and Assistants to one another, and that Liberty was the Friend and Foundation of Reformation, they made no doubt, but as long as *High-Church* kept their Ark, they should flourish——— Harden'd with this Confidence, they doubled their Files, enlarg'd their Territories, encreas'd their Numbers, and built their new Play-house at the *Hay-Market*.

But, GOD be prais'd, *Tempora mutantur*, and the Players may say the rest, *the Times are chang'd*. *High-Church* is fallen, and all the Encouragements to Vice are fallen with them. Her Majesty having dethron'd the Party, and according to her own constant Example, being desirous to bring all her Subjects to the strictest Rules of Vertue, Modesty, and A Christian Behaviour——— These Nurseries of Crime have been brought into Remembrance before her Majesty, *as in my last*——— Now they tell us, they are suspended but for a Time, during the Weight of the War, and while the constant Course of our National Devotions are employ'd in addressing Heaven for its Help—and they are then to be restor'd. And one of our News Writers says, they have petition'd the QUEEN in this Case, and have receiv'd a favourable Answer, &c.

But now that the Resurrection they promise themselves may be effectually prevented, I have an humble Proposal to make to all the Friends of Reformation in this Town; and this is the End of my moving it at this Time——— The Players have some Dependance upon this Work, however wicked, it is their, *as they call it*, lawful Employment, they depend upon it, and they have, *at least some of them*, Families to maintain. Again, There are Proprietors or Patentees, or what they please to call them, Landlords and Owners, who have bought Properties, Shares, &c. in Parts of these Things; these People plead the Ruin and Destruction of their Families, and will be ever

ever seizing the Government, to restore them; and the very Sound of the Word *Property* has so much Weight in it with me, and is in it self so Sacred, that be the Foundation never so rotten, I am for preserving the Substance; and therefore to stop the Mouths of these People, clenching down the Order against them, and preventing the Resurrection of Vice, I am for making a general Collection of Charity, to raise a Sum of Money sufficient to make all the Players easie, and obtaining their Consent to suppress finally the very Name of an Actor or a Stage, in this Nation.

1. It is to be enquir'd here, how I would buy them off, and what I would give them?
2. How I would secure the Nation from the Return?
3. How much Money would do it, and how to be rais'd?

Now Gentlemen, that I may dispatch the Case at once, and have Time to come back to the Affairs of *Scotland*, and the King of *Sweden*, I shall speak very short, and direct to these Three.

1. How I would get the Players off from their Employ, my Answer is, I would raise a Sum of Money to give every Actor in proportion to his or her usual Earnings or Gains, so as to buy it off at 20 Years Purchase. This is an Equivalent, for with this Money laid out in Annuities or other Purchase, they may secure the Maintenance they receiv'd, to be constant to their Families—and they could have no Colour or Pretence to complain of hard Usage, having a just Equivalent in Money for what they had quitted.

2. As to the Question, how I will secure against the Return of the Players, I answer; 1. Of the Players to whom this Money shall be given, I think, 'tis but Reason to demand some Security, that they will never act again in the Queen's Dominions; this to be by Bond, Oath, and others bound with them, or otherwise, as may be convenient. 2. That the same Fund should purchase the present Theatres, and demolish them, *that is, as Theatres*, and have the Patents or Licenses for Acting made over to them, in order to prevent others being obtain'd. And lastly, That an humble Address be made to her Majesty, that in Consideration of this Contract, and to encourage the Reformation, no other Patent, License, or Authority may be obtain'd, but that her Majesty will be pleas'd to suppress them by Proclamation, and declare, that no other Patent or License shall be granted for their Return.

3. Lastly, *I come to the Money*; and as the Sum will be large and extravagant, yet, *First*, I am for dealing honourably with the Gentlemen, the Players; they are many of them Men of Wit, and of Breeding, and must live something genteely; I would give every one of them wherewith to buy for themselves and Families, as much annual Rent, as they made annual Gain of their Acting in the best Time of those Playings, *then they could never complain*; and I doubt not, many of them would be very glad of it.

As to raising the Money, which is the last Thing; I would raise the Money by a voluntary Contribution to suppress Vice and Immoralities in the Nation; and if a hundred Thousand Pound were to be wanted, *and much less will not do it*, yet I am perswaded it would be obtain'd. And because I will make no Offers to others, which are not likely to be done, and which I will not endeavour to put forward, I do offer, that whenever so good a Work shall be set on Foot by honest and well directed Hands—I will undertake to bring in Subscriptions among my own Acquaintance, and by my little Interest, for at least one Thousand Pounds of the Money.

And let no Man cavil at going this Way to do a Work, which ought to be done freely by the Government—By such Delays the Thing is neglected, and is not done; I am for buying Vice out of the Nation if I could, since I cannot get it pull'd down any other way——— We have bought our Liberties, why not our Reformation? Our Ancestors in the Barons Wars bought their Liberties with their Blood, the late long Parliament bought the *Habeas Corpus* Bill, and no Body grudges the Money.

If

If the Play-houſes were effectually ſuppreſs'd, ſo as to return no more into *England*, tho' it coſt them an hundred Thouſand Pounds, I believe, our Poſterity would not grudge the Money. I wiſh, GOD would put it into the Hearts of ſome Patriots of Piety to ſet this Project on Foot, in which I dare anſwer for Succeſs, and can promiſe them very good Aſſiſtance.

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